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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY OF THE FUTURE

BY

MR. JAMES E. KENT

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Building and Maintaining Public Acceptance of and Political Support for the Military of the Future

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ABSTRACT

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The United States' position as a leader in world affairs today is dependent on its military strength. This may be true to an even greater degree in the future. The military relies on the United States Congress for all its resources and is, therefore, dependent upon the support of the American people. Based upon the current status of the acceptance of and support for today's American military establishment and using different interpretations of future military missions, this research analyzes what actions will be required to at least maintain, if not improve upon, current levels of acceptance and support. It also examines actions required to obtain adequate levels of funding from Congress to fund the future military.

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BUILDING AND MAINTAINING PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY OF THE FUTURE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Support for the military was not an issue for American colonists. It was simply an accepted fact that men would fight when called upon. "The American colonists adopted the Tudor tradition of...reliance upon militia forces for defense." This belief was only slightly modified by George Washington, when he made his recommendations to Congress that it authorize both a small standing army and a significant, "formidable" National Militia that could be mobilized in time of war. 2 Support for this concept would be universal, Washington believed, because "the People of this Continent are too well acquainted with the Merits of the subject to require information or example."3 His belief was based on the fact that American colonists had been fighting wars of varying sizes, on and off, for almost 100 years prior to the Revolution, using a militia system. 4 Washington may have been correct about the former colonists, but he underestimated the resistance of Congress. Although the Militia Act of 1792 officially incorporated the British militia tradition into the American military structure, its initial implementation was halfhearted.5

From the end of the Revolutionary War until the Civil War resistance to the idea of a large, standing army was significant. Some of this opposition was based on a desire to save the cost of

a substantial military force for other government programs or simply reduce the amount of taxes. Some outright resistance to the concept of a significant standing army was an outgrowth of the fear of a military takeover of the government, based on our experience with British martial law. There also were many peace movements within the United States that opposed the military establishment based on philosophical terms.

These attitudes changed somewhat during the Civil War when the Army and Navy were expected to preserve the Constitution. However, after the war ended, there came a period described as the "Dark Ages." During this period, Emory Upton, an 1861 graduate of West Point who ended the war as a brevet major general, studied the military institutions of other countries and drafted reforms of the American Army. He developed a brain tumor and committed suicide before he could complete his recommendations. They were published posthumously as THE MILITARY POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES in 1904 by Elihu Root, then Secretary of War. Upton's plans included a larger and rapidly expandable regular army. His original concepts and similar ideas put forth after his death by his proponents went largely unheeded. 10

America's entry into World War I found the Army totally unprepared and it took one year just for the American army to build some capability to fight in France. The United States learned a lesson and, as a result, America was much better prepared for its next war. Preparation began well before

America's direct involvement in World War II. The National Guard was mobilized in 1939 for training. "Congress passed the first conscription law ever enacted while the U.S. was at peace, the Selective Service Training and Service Act" in September 1940. 12 More commonly known as the "draft", this process was maintained in effect with amendments and name changes from 1940 until 1973 as the mechanism for inducting young men into the military. The current Selective Service System requires registration only.

CURRENT STATE OF SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY

One factor that directly affects the amount of support for the military, both among the public and Congress, is the number of people in the general population and in Congress that have served in the military. Forty three percent of the Senate has served in some military capacity (active or reserve), but only twenty six percent of the House of Representatives performed some military service. Furthermore, for baby-boomer age politicians, such as President Clinton and former Speaker of the House Gingrich, there is no longer any political stigma associated with a lack of veteran status. "Since the end of the draft in 1973...military service has become an option, not a prerequisite." 14

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY

Public confidence in the military is currently pretty high (66%). Although not as high as just after Operations Desert Shield/Storm (85%), it has been consistently much higher over the

past ten years than its lowest point, a few years after the Vietnam War (50%). However, a high opinion of the military as an institution does not equate to an automatic approval of the defense budget.

A November 1995 poll by the <u>Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA)</u>, based in Washington DC, reported 42 percent of the US public feeling that defense spending is too high, 23 percent perceiving it as too low, and 31 percent comfortable with the status quo. When the status quo plurality is pushed to express a preference, 11 percent migrate to the "too high" opinion and nine percent migrate to the "too low." These results are broadly consistent with other recent polls on the question. The PIPA poll also showed a majority of Americans strongly opposed to Congress adding to the budget in excess of Pentagon requests and convinced that defense spending "has weakened the US economy and given some allies an economic edge."

Putting the issue into context also matters. As summarized in the recent PIPA report, The Foreign Policy Gap, most opinion surveys show majorities of Americans supporting defense cuts if specifically in order to balance the budget. Similarly, suggesting that funds trimmed from the Pentagon account would go toward education and crime reduction increases support for reductions.

A 1994 public opinion survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations finds between 26 percent and 34 percent of the public favoring defense spending cuts, depending on how the question is asked. Between 18 percent and 21 percent of the public want to increase spending. The status quo wins support from between 41 percent and 56 percent of those polled.

These Council results represent an eight percent decrease in the support for reductions from four years earlier and a seven percent growth in the numbers favoring increases. Looking back over previous polls, the Council contrasts their 1994 findings with what they see as a "surge in support" for increased spending in 1978; "support for the status quo" in 1982 and 1986, meaning a plurality favoring current levels; and a "dramatic shift toward reducing defense spending" in 1990. Gallup polls show, and the Council's polls

confirm, that since 1982 significantly more Americans have supported cuts than have supported increases. The 1994 move toward the status quo did not upset this longer-term trend. Nor is increased support for the status quo surprising given that defense spending fell 18 percent between 1990 and 1994 and the Clinton administration ended its efforts to argue defense cuts in 1994. The PIPA survey indicated the key role of leadership in the formation of public sentiments about defense-related issues. It found that a solid majority of the public would support relatively deep cuts in the Pentagon budget if the President and Congress proposed them. ¹⁶

Although the above-cited studies did not make a connection to military spending for specific items, there are several ongoing defense acquisitions that could be used to support further cuts. Aircraft carriers, for example, are one big-ticket item, which cause a lot of controversy. The Navy is in the process of replacing older, conventionally powered aircraft carriers with new, nuclear powered, Nimitz-class carriers at the cost of approximately \$1 billion each. This is being done at great expense, even though the conventional carriers are preferable for certain missions and the life-cycle cost of a nuclear-powered carrier is 58% greater than a conventionally powered carrier. Also, due to lesser downtime for overhaul, eleven conventional carriers could provide the same forward presence as a 12 carrier nuclear force. 18 There are even some studies that suggest that only ten or possibly as few as eight carriers are required. 19 Another area of questionable military spending is in the area of tactical aircraft. Currently the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps are planning on purchasing a combination of F-22s, F/A-

18E/Fs, and Joint Strike Fighters (JSFs) at a cost of many billions of dollars. Although designed for slightly different missions, there is enough overlap between these programs to make pursuing all three simultaneously questionable. One defense analyst calls for the cancellation of the F-22 and F/A-18E/Fs procurements and recommends continuing the use of existing, highly capable F-15s and keeping surplus F/A-18A/Bs in service instead. This analyst also calls for a delay in production of the JSF, while continuing research on advanced fighter technology.²⁰

CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY

Congress is the key to military support, since it annually votes the military budget and sets the limit on the size of the military. To some degree, maintaining popular support among the electorate should sustain the support of Congress, but this is not always automatically the case. Some presidents have been a lot less popular with the majority in Congress than among the voters; likewise, the military can win the hearts and minds of Americans across the country and still not be as popular with the Senate or the House. However, there is one aspect of the military that even its biggest critics find appealing: the revenue generated by a defense contractor or military installation added to the local economy in their districts. For example, "Congress in the past three years has bought 20 C-130 transport planes for \$1 billion that the Air Force hasn't requested. The planes were built in [then Speaker of the House Newt] Gingrich's district in

Marietta, GA, and many were then stationed at bases in Mississippi, [Senate Majority Leader Trent] Lott's home state."21

CURRENT STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY

MAINTAINING PUBLIC SUPPORT

One current concept to maintain support for the military, especially when it is involved in contingency operations, is to mobilize Reserve forces. This strategy evolved from analysis of the American people's support for the Vietnam War. In the opinion of some, President Johnson could have better maintained support for the war effort for a longer period of time if he had mobilized the reserves. However, others maintain that "a war that became critically unpopular anyway would have achieved that condition very much earlier in time", if the reserves had been mobilized.²²

Reserve mobilization has been a part of many recent military operations, including Desert Shield/Storm and the ongoing operations in Bosnia. Using a Presidential Select Reserve Call-up (PSRC), the president can augment the active force by as many as 200,000 reservists for a period of up to 270 days (expanded from the limit of 180 days during Desert Storm) without Congressional approval. The mobilization period can be extended even longer with Congressional approval. Mobilization can and has worked well for an all-out, one-time effort like World War II and Operations Desert Shield and Storm. The reservists and guardsman who served

in World Wars I and II and the Korean War "were non-professionals in the sense that they were non-careerists who came to fight a war and get it over with so they could get back to their families and ways of making a living." 23 However, this practice may actually reduce popular support if mobilization of any particular unit is too frequent, too long, and/or perceived as something that the active forces should handle. Reservists, their families, and their employers understand that they have an obligation to serve when there is a crisis situation. However, reservists' morale and the general public's attitude towards the military will suffer if it is perceived, for example, that the reserves are just being used as filler troops, or as part of a manpower work-around for an ongoing political quagmire, such as the Bosnia peacekeeping operation. The concept of using Reservists as filler-troops, vice mobilizing an entire Reserve unit, also violates the active Army's own Regimental concept, which is based upon the belief that identification with a smaller unit helps to build cohesion and subsequently individual morale and performance.

MAINTAINING CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT

Congress usually deals with the Executive Branch, including the Department of Defense, by means of compromise. This is very evident in the budget process. For example, the military might state that it needs an annual budget of \$300 billion to maintain superiority over all other nations. Congress assumes the number

is padded and offers \$200 billion. Through negotiations between the White House and representatives of both houses of Congress, a compromise figure of \$250 billion is reached. Congress probably believes is still too much and the military knows is not enough, but that it is the best they can do. This may be a good approach to buying something like a used car, but even when making commercial purchases, it is better to know exactly how much you should pay for it.

FUTURE TRENDS THAT MAY EFFECT THE SITUATION

WHAT IF WE GAVE A WAR AND NO ONE CAME?

Currently, there is no nation on earth that could unilaterally challenge the United States in a conventional war and expect to win. However, there are some lesser powers that could potentially inflict serious casualties before they were defeated. Current trends in American force and weapons development are aimed at widening the gap and giving us overwhelming advantage over today's potential adversaries. What if the United States does such a good job at playing world policeman and develops such overwhelming military strength that the rest of the world is scared straight and drops out of the competition? This could mean that both the general public and Congress would expect another peace dividend. After all, as Secretary of War John C. Calhoun said in 1820, "the organization

of the army ought to have reference to the objects for which it is maintained."24

PEER COMPETITOR

Currently, there is no conventional peer competitor for the United States. However, if one arises, it probably will not be one of today's highly developed, truly democratic nations. More likely a future peer competitor would be a third-world country, such as India or the People's Republic of China. These countries already have the advantage over the United States in terms of potential size of their military, based on their larger populations. Assuming that they can acquire or develop their own sophisticated technology, which would significantly reduce our current technological edge, our small, elite military would be at a combat power disadvantage. Without a significant build-up in size or some technological break-through, the United States would no longer be the world's only superpower and might even slip to a lower rating.

BUDGET COMPETITOR

Social Security has had its coffers raided throughout a period when baby-boomer payments were being made into the fund. Although some stopgap measures have been made to stay the inevitable collapse of the retirement system, most experts say there is still a day of reckoning coming. When baby-boomers start to collect in large numbers and the supporting work force

represents a smaller percentage of the population, new sources to fund the Social Security shortfall will be sought. Total application of the current Department of Defense budget to that account would help, but true reform is required. However, in the less than perfect world in which we live, the reforms implemented will probably be inadequate. The result is that there still will be a call in the future for the budgets of other agencies, such as Defense, to be cut.

FUTURE STRATEGIES

Some of the strategies discussed here should be implemented regardless of the future world situation, others are situation dependent. A potential solution, put forth in the classic science fiction work Starship Trooper, would be to require anyone wishing to vote or hold public office to be a veteran of public or military service. In such a future world, popular and political support of the military would not be an issue. Given the current nature of our democracy, the best way to work the issue would be to create a larger pool of veterans with a greater variety of social backgrounds. This would improve the odds that voters and politicians will have served in public or military service and, though they still "may fail in wisdom ... [or] lapse in civic virtue", on average their support of the future military would be "enormously better." 27

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING FUTURE PUBLIC SUPPORT

When the United States decides to commit troops to some place like Bosnia, a coherent plan must be developed for their eventual withdrawal as soon as possible after forces are committed, if not beforehand. As the plans are developed, it may become clear that troops must be committed for a long time, as they were in Germany after World War II. If so, then it must be understood by all involved that this is a new active force mission that will require an increase in size of the active military. It is the job of the President and of the Secretary of Defense to ensure that Congress and the American people fully understand the ramifications as early as possible. Official statements should not be sugarcoated with phrases like, "I promise to bring the troops home by Christmas", if there is no rationale basis to believe it to be true. The process of providing this information must not begin after some incident takes place or is even about to take place, which threatens the security of the United States. The process must begin with a clear statement of defense policy that is officially endorsed by Congress and appended by specific treaties and defense agreements with various nations and organizations.

There should be fewer mobilizations of Reserves for mission operations other than war (MOOTW), except in the cases of unforeseen, extreme emergencies, such as a devastating hurricane or an unexpected military action. This will reduce the

possibility of Reserve mobilization having a negative, rather than a positive effect on public support for tomorrow's military by making the need for mobilization undeniable. If the tempo of operations (OPTEMPO) of the future military is so high that it is damaging to the morale of the active forces, there is another alternative to reserve component mobilization or simply enlarging the active force that should be considered. This would be to convert more of the active forces into the types of "just-intime" units most often deployed (i.e. light infantry) and convert some of the reserve forces into or create new reserve units as "just-in-case" forces (i.e. mechanized infantry or armor). Equipment from active units undergoing conversion could be put into forward-deployed storage or re-issued to reserve units. One reason given for not shifting more combat forces to the Guard and Reserve is a historic lack of confidence in their effectiveness upon mobilization. However, the Army is hard at work to change both the perception and the reality.

Doubts about readiness would be greatly reduced if more Guard and Reserve combat units conducted the same type of training as active forces on a regular recurring basis. The belief that the "highest trained army is the best" has long been a tenant of this nation's military philosophy. Another measure that would greatly enhance Guard and Reserve readiness would be to staff Reserve unit headquarters at all levels with more active duty personnel, as the Marine Corps does with its reserve units.

These two policies, if fully implemented for Reserve and Guard combat units, would result in a dramatic improvement in combat readiness.

The net effect of mobilizing for longer periods of scheduled training rather than unexpected deployment might not make much of a change in terms of numbers of days of active duty for Reserve combat unit members. However, it is highly likely that most Reservists, their families, and employers would find 180 days of periodic active duty at Fort Irwin, scheduled well in advance, more acceptable than an unanticipated letter notifying the Reservist of a call-up in 30 days for the same length of active duty in Bosnia.

Another way to build and maintain popular support for the military would be to re-institute a draft. George Washington made a case for compulsory military service in a report to Congress, "It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a free Government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even his personal services to the defense of it."29 Unlike previous drafts, this would include both male and females young adults. Draftees would have three options, depending on the needs of the service and their abilities: non-military service, reserve duty, or active duty.

Under the non-military national service option, an individual's obligation would be fulfilled by serving as a low-

paid, low-skill worker led by reserve or active duty noncommissioned and commissioned officers. This service organization
would be a cross between the Peace Corps and the Civilian
Conservation Corps, focusing on such non-military missions as
disaster relief, forest fires, and nation building. Young people
choosing this option would not be permitted to continue for a
career, thus avoiding the future financial burden of pensions.
Instead, these "veterans" would receive educational benefits
and/or an enhanced social security payment based on successful
completion of their service.

The reserve option would work much as it had under the previous selective service system, except that personnel would be drafted directly into the reserves to fill critical skill positions. The pay would be based on the active duty pay scales as adjusted and differentiated between inactive and active duty training. In addition to education benefits, the existing reserve retirement system would remain in effect and qualifying reservists would be permitted to extend their service as long as there was a legitimate need. There would be no barriers or penalties, as there have been in the past, for reservists wishing to transfer to an active status if there were appropriate vacancies.

The active duty option to meet this service obligation would be met by serving in an active military force for a similar period to the non-military service, but at a higher rate of pay.

The pay differential could be justified on two bases. First, there is the inherent danger of military service. Second, a premium is required for candidates who can meet the necessarily higher entrance requirements for military service. After successfully completing their initial term of service, these draftees would be offered the option to continue in the military for a career.

Such a program of mandatory public service would build a much broader basis for support of the military by encouraging a greater mix of society to join. It would greatly reduce recruiting difficulties expected as the workforce gets smaller. Even for those choosing the non-military operation, their service in support of American foreign policy would teach them a lesson in geopolitics much better than any amount of civil schooling. It would go a long way, even among non-veterans by word of mouth, in counter-acting the resurgence of isolationism. Another, coincidental benefit of this program might be a reduction in crime.

In 1973, the last year of the military draft, almost 64,000 persons between the ages of 18 and 21 were arrested and charged with violent crimes. Ten years later, that number grew to nearly 93,000. And in 1993, the last year for which the FBI has figures, there were roughly 114,000 arrests. By comparison, the Census Bureau reports the number of 18- to 24-year-olds rose only slightly over the same 20-year span, from 24.7 million to 26.2 million.³⁰

Perhaps, implementation of a national service requirement could reverse this trend. Unfortunately, a recent study of

studies that evaluated the effectiveness of current correctional facilities programs, styled on military basic training, concluded "the only summarizing statement one can make about boot camps is the lack of any consistent effect, either positive or negative." These results may have been due more to the quality of the studies or variances in individual programs than to the efficacy of the concept. However, before any arguments are made for reinstituting some form of the draft based on an overall reduction in crime, comprehensive studies must be done.

MAINTAINING FUTURE CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT

"You can't cheat an honest man" should become the mantra of senior military leaders. If they expect to get the resources they need from the President and Congress, military leaders must ask for no more than what's required and accept no less. "Our only credibility is to go to the President and ultimately the Congress and say, 'We've done as much as possible.'" This approach applies to the size of the military, its active-reserve mix, and the equipment required for such a force. It is important to note here that just doing the right thing will not be enough. It will be just as critical to make sure that everyone knows you did the right thing. Getting the word out through the news outlets, popular television programs, such as "JAG", or popular novels, such as Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan series, can help the average person outside the defense establishment to understand some of the underlying issues. Secretary of Defense William Cohen

recently brought his department's message to Americans outside the traditional circle of audiences for a Pentagon chief by speaking to the Illinois General Assembly in January and in February to employees at Microsoft. "Cohen's message is this: For all the domestic prosperity produced by the Information Age symbolized by the astounding success of Microsoft - America's economic power is still dependent on its military strength."33 It will be critical that military leaders voluntarily turn in unnecessary resources. Consider some of these statistics in a recent article on defense spending. "The Air Force boasts a general for every 23 airplanes (down from 244 planes [during WWII]) and the Navy has an admiral for every 1.6 ships (down from 130 ships [during WWII])."34 Are these innumerable flag officers leftover from the Cold War and do they simply sit around thinking of new ways to spend money? Or, more likely, are they program and project managers or standing task force commanders and staff members? Most likely, they filling positions that did not exist during WWII, but are critical to our nation's defense now. However, if implied accusations such as this are not responded to, it only goes to reinforce the belief of the public that the Defense budget can still be severely reduced.

New technologies are becoming available that will allow the military to operate exponentially better, rather than simply arithmetically enchancing today's capabilities. Information dominance systems such as the All Source Analysis System (ASAS),

Block III, will greatly automate and enhance the commander's ability to visualize and assess the battlefield. Decisive engagement systems, such as the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) Block II equipped with Brilliant Anti-Tank (BAT) Submunition, will defeat moving tanks and stationary targets at great distances. These and other leaps of technology will provide tomorrow's combat commander with unbelievably quick and devastating firepower and the information he needs to apply it to greatest effect.

To fully realize dramatic improvements in cost and effectiveness from new technologies, military organizations and their operational processes have to be dramatically redesigned. Likewise supporting facilities may have to be redesigned, created, or eliminated. The old ways of force reduction and budgeting for defense will not be adequate in the future. Rapid changes in the world situation, acerbated by technology in the hands of our potential enemies, require us to have a military that is fully staffed at all times, adequately trained and equipped, and morally supported by the American people and Congress. This will not happen with the current zero-sum game philosophy and antiquated, stovepipe budget process. The problem with the current, sequential budgetary process is that, between the Department of Defense, other Departments, the White House, and Congress, there is too much segmentation of the process, which leads to an "us vs. them" mentality. The process is also

very slow and sometimes out of synch with the current world situation. It has to be more of a team process with representatives of all the principles working together from the beginning. This would include representatives of the State Department and other government departments or agencies that expect support from or could give support to the Department of Defense.

Along with revising the budget process, a continuing base realignment and closure (BRAC) process needs to be re-instituted. It should be a biennial process, tied-in to the budget schedule. In some two-year cycles there might be no recommended closures or realignments, but, when needed, time and money would be saved by not requiring separate legislation to authorize the process. Congress would still retain the final authority to override the Department of Defense's recommendations, but on an all or none basis. Under this BRAC process, refusal to permit closures would result in an automatic plus up of the budget to cover the cost of the unneeded facilities. Without recourse to simply make the Department take funding for support "out of hide", Congress might be more willing to concede the need for such economies.

All these revised procedures should be implemented by a process action team (PAT) staffed by the affected Departments, the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Congressional Budget office (CBO). Their products would thus be pre-reviewed and pre-approved by their respective organizations.

FIX SOCIAL SECURITY

We may have seen our biggest threat to tomorrow's military and, to paraphrase Pogo, he may be us. The Social Security system is not beyond repair, yet. Some stern measures, if taken now, could prevent a tremendous shortfall in the future. In his January 19, 1999 State of the Union Address, President Clinton presented two programs to "save social security". The first program is a rather straightforward. "Clinton is proposing diverting 62 percent of an anticipated \$4 trillion federal budget surplus over the next 15 years to Social Security, then investing less than one-quarter of that amount in the equity markets instead of Treasury securities, in which the fund now invests."37 The second proposal will be even more controversial. "Clinton also wants to take another 11 percent of the budget surplus to establish 'universal savings accounts,' which would be similar to the 401(k) accounts that many employers offer. Together, the two proposals could add as much as \$6.5 billion or so a month to the market."38

CONCLUSION

Unlike periods of low threat in the past, when the American military establishment either stood silently by or bemoaned its slow decay or rapid dismemberment, today's military is actively participating in its own restructuring. However, to be optimal, reduction, reorganization, and even building-up the size of the force must be done proactive, not reactively. "We cannot depend

on volunteers in future wars, as we have in past wars, the simple reason that the onrush of a modern war is so sudden and all our possible protagonists, concerning whom we need have any serious apprehension, are so thoroughly prepared that there will be no time to train volunteers."³⁹ The American military must be fully and actively engaged with Congress, with the American people, and with other Government departments so that everyone has some pride of authorship in the finished product. The essence of maintaining support for military in the future is simply to help Congress and the American public to reconnect with the principles and heritage upon which the American military establishment and this nation were founded.

WORD COUNT = 5,215

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- ²⁶ Robert A. Heinlein, <u>Starship Troopers</u> (New York: Ace Books, 1987), 144-145.
 - ²⁷ Ibid., 145.
 - 28 Weigley, Towards an American Army, 176.
 - 29 Weigley, The American Military, 6.
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